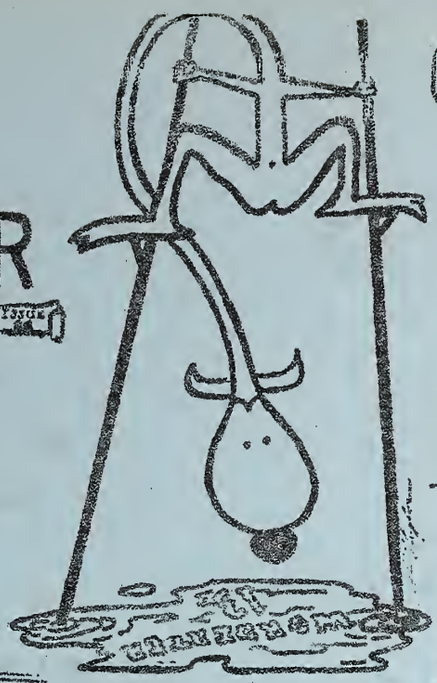
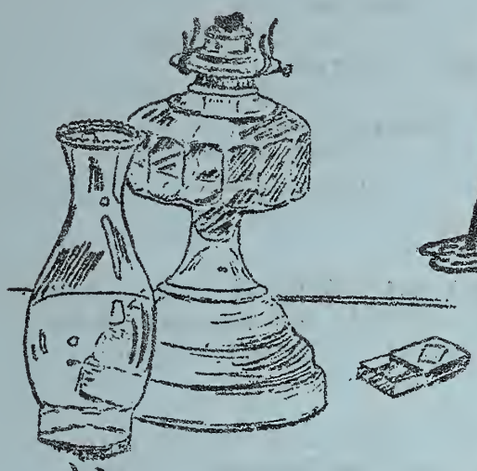
WORDEATER

ISSUE





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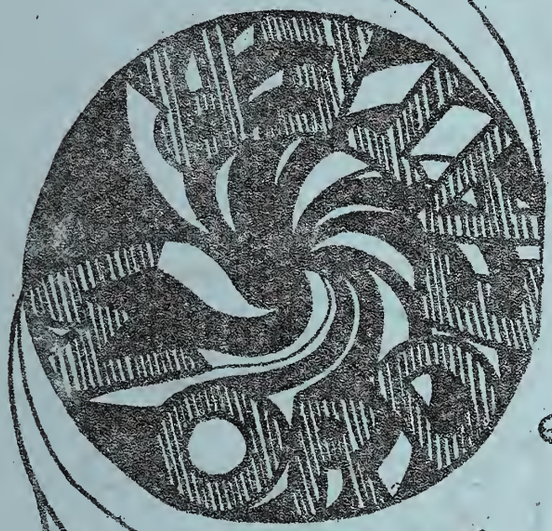

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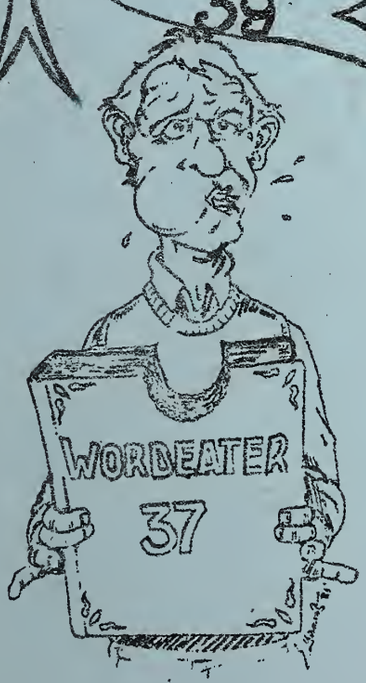
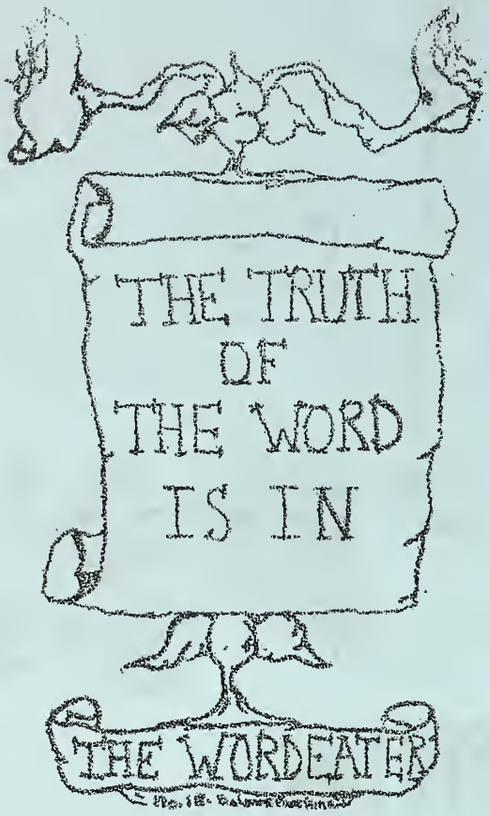


WORD EATER 3

ISSUE 40

WORDEATER-
10 YEAR
ANNIVERSARY



WORDEATER XI STAFF

Judy Belfield
Kristi Carsten
Bob Frederick
Mark Hulfactor
Ernest McCabe
Dave Moore
John Stobart

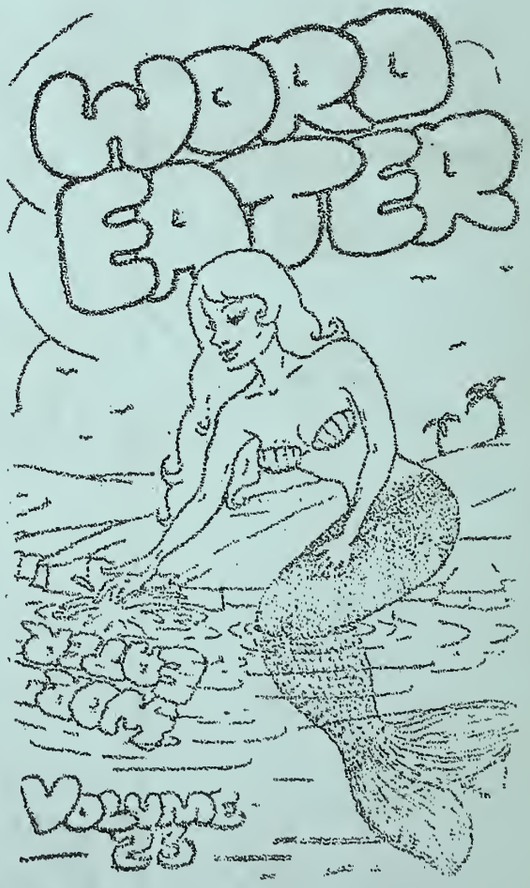
Loudmouth McKracken has done it again! He has wheedled, cajoled, and demanded as his due an entire decade of delectable Wordeaters. What a pig-out!

Those of you who like to cater to appreciative palates like Loudmouth's can submit your literary concoctions to John Stobart in C 1069.

When the fare is particularly toothsome, Loudmouth belches up literary awards, as he did this issue, for Judy Belfield and Mike Stillman, $25 each. Belfield also designed covers for this issue.

The next two deadlines for submissions are October 1 and December 3.

CHOW DOWN!



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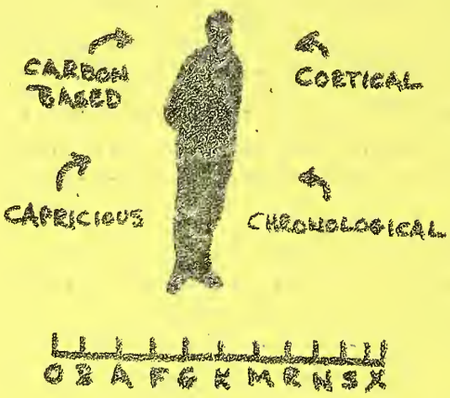
Michael A. Stillman

A HATFUL OF TIAMONDS



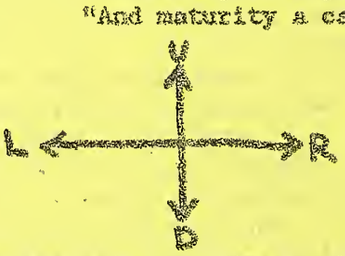
Time itself was lost in dream
When I sat down to write
A friendly pen, a phantom arm
To guide me through the night

Words strolled forth, hand in hand
To leap and melt like ice
A dozen fresh-cut diamonds
In a beam of broken light

A muse appeared:with golden hair
Wide eyes a softly brown
In words of hope she spun a web
And drew the curtain down

She smiled at the sparkle in my eye
That some let fade with age
"Life is just a game," she said,
"And maturity a cage."

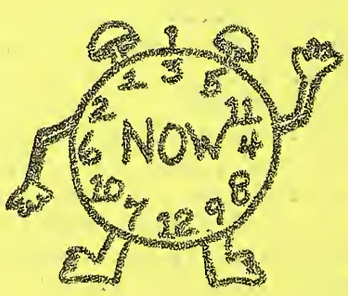
presto tach one
dig it tach two



Whenever someone asks me, "Do you have the time?" I say, "For what zone?" After all, this is the jet age, and people should be specific.

tach twenty-three

Her words were soothing, like a caress
As she told me of my life
The many currents in one big pond
A choice of peace or strife



presti tach four
digiti tach three

prestidigitator
tach five

Unwritten haiku, Jan. 21, 1959:

your eyes blink softly
in the afterglow of dream
will you take me there?

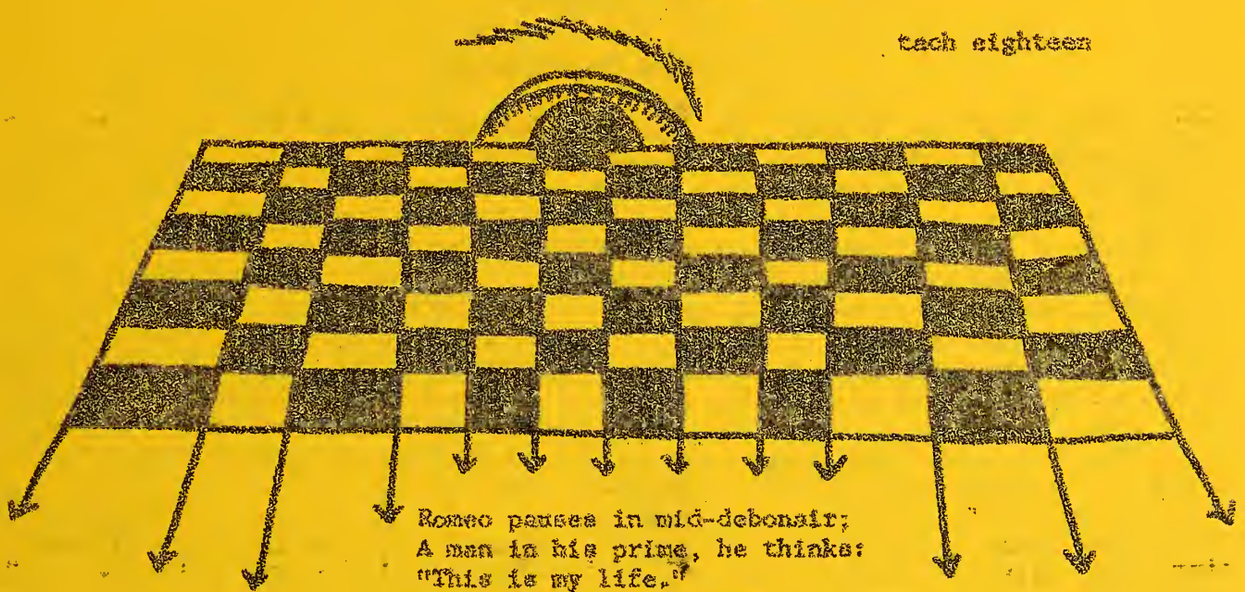
tach seven

The eyewitness shivered and took another gulp of sheep medicine. Like a skid-row Winston Churchill he told the reporters, "Faceless it came, and Bible black, with claws that raked our souls."

(continued)

Time: Checkerboard tiles, like a
crossword puzzle without a
clue. A foxtrot ballroom when
all the dancers have left.
The debutantes have come and
gone, and the silver tarnishes
in the morning light.

tach eighteen



Romeo pauses in mid-debonair;
A man in his prime, he thinks:
"This is my life."
A lungful of confidence
Carries him to Juliet's door;
Opportunity: who could want more?

tach eight

I take a seat on the grass in front of the old lady, and she recites a poem with no words, and does a combined meditation/pant-flage, accompanied by three buzzing flies. She goes through an elaborate ritual, with detailed insect choreography, employing odd literary devices like palindromes and oxymorons, seemingly a gag but with a kind of awkward elegance.

As the third movement skids to an anticlimax, she winks at me and says, "Tachyons -- they're the key. Jump on one."

She is interrupted by a jet plane overhead, skywriting a message. "Skywriting is about as subtle as a sledgehammer," she mumbles. The skywriter writes:

The time rolls by and the sun's up
high
Movin' my dreams along

The daylight sighs and the moon
drops by
You look so young and strong
Movin' your dreams along

And so on, to tach infinity. The jetstream roars into another jump-cut reality, and another frame advances. We are now part of a crowd watching a stage set with some familiar but slightly eccentric-looking individuals. Bob Dylan walks up to the microphone and says:

"Time is a jet plane
It moves too fast."
To which John Stobart added:
"I think I have jet lag."
Then Robert Hunter said:
"Satin blouse unbuttoning
Time is a stripper
Doin' it just for you."

(continued)

A Hatful of Tiamonds, continued

David Bowie knew a little more about this disreputable wench:

"Time: She flexes like a whore,
Falls wanking to the floor,
Her trick is you and me."

Mike Stillman interrupted rudely:

"Time -- Hah! Time only matters when you're in prison, and space only matters when you're in the universe, and matter is only timed when you're in space, and --"

The time line folds in on itself like the mystic spiral of Taoism, the cosmic mainspring. The spherical vertices meet at the center of the labyrinth, releasing everyone's personal minotaur, the latent and lambent psychosis that is the seed of each being's subjective reality, for one flashing instant. The spiral path in Dante's Purgatorio meshes with the Escherian Mobius and the circular ricercars of Bach's Musical Offering through the origin of Time, a living mandala.

A semblance of objective reality reasserts itself with a cataclysmic shudder, and sanity makes a sudden return. A plane pierces the sonic fabric overhead, and the crowd disburses.

tach end

****

Judy Belfield

SETTING THINGS RIGHT

Technically, she is dead. But she has to die again in front of witnesses to make it legal. So she is alive, but not really, as she stands in a small, dimly-lit room at the end of a long, carpeted hallway.

At the other end of the hallway, behind wide, emergency-room-type doors with windows, she sees both the witnesses' heads. She can't see their faces -- they are too far away -- but she knows who they are.

There is a soft, reclining couch in the room, the kind one sees in movie versions of psychiatric offices. At either end of the couch are lamps, about five-feet tall, with translucent ivory shades that diffuse a soft pink throughout the room. It looks like a wake. How appropriate that is, she thinks. She's being waked, literally, so she can die again the right way. What is the right way, she wonders.

Perhaps if she had written a note the first time, made things clear for those she left behind. But she hadn't. It was a calculated act in a moment of secret despair. No one could have understood the loneliness, the dejection, the temptation of a non-feeling eternity.

What does it matter now, anyway, she asks herself. What is done, is done. This reenactment is not only necessary, it is tacitly demanded by the questioners -- all those people who don't know why -- or can't believe -- she is dead. Motions. She must go through the motions. They are minor stopgaps in the way of her rendezvous with infinity, but they are inevitable -- the red tape in the bureaucracy of setting things right.

She settles herself down on the couch, folding her hands, fingers intertwined at her waist. She waits. It won't be long. She thinks about the frilly organdy blouse, all ruffly at the neck and wrists. She'll put it on later. There will be plenty of time. It hangs in a niche somewhere behind her, next to a pair of black slacks. The doll's clothes are neatly folded on a table -- white, fragrant, soft. She has to dress the doll too. But there will be time.

She had requested Chopin music, any piece, as long as it was lively. It is not playing now, but it will. She waits -- calmly, quietly. She glances at the doors at the end of the hallway. They are still watching. She waves, fluttering her long, delicate fingers. She smiles.

"I'm here," says a corpulent old woman, tiptoeing in with a cloth-covered tray. She has a fleshy, motherly face, and tightly-crinkled, gray-brown ringlets poking out from under a bandana. "Are you ready?"

"Yes," she answers.

"Let me explain what's going to happen. We don't want any surprises here. No need to worry. It won't hurt a bit. No pain. Just falling off to sleep gently, like the Lord's holy angels gathering you up in soft feathers and carrying you away.

"I'm going to give you an injection. You'll hardly feel it. It's a new kind of fluid that works ever so sweetly. You'll have about an hour. You can get dressed then, listen to the music you requested, and just relax. Your skin will turn a yellowish-translucent color as the fluid works its way into your system. This will begin at the fingertips and creep up slowly. Don't be alarmed. It's perfectly natural. There is no pain. Toward the end, you'll feel very sleepy. Best for you to lie down when the sleepiness starts.

"Then, you'll just keep on sleeping forever. I've heard many of 'em say it is euphoric -- pleasant. Well, that's it. Do you have any questions?"

"No . . . I'm ready." The old woman uncovers the tray and lifts a

(continued)

syringe in the air. She spritzes it slightly, then injects the fluid.

"There. All done. Relax. Enjoy it." She leaves the room by some unseen side door. The witnesses watch through the windows.

"It's done," says the first.

"Oh," says the second.

"We'd better not watch now. She'll be changing her clothes."

They pull slowly away from the doors, and each finds a plush chair to sit in. Their faces are bland. Both women are dressed in black and wear veiled hats. They sit, seeming to think and feel nothing. They do not move. They appear, almost, not to be breathing.

Inside, the young woman walks over to the niche and begins to dress. Soft, silky pastel underthings. Soft, white, knee-high stockings. The lavishly-frilled blouse. The tailored slacks. Black, patent-leather slippers. She is set, perfectly dressed, her long, black hair rippling softly down her back in large, graceful curls.

The doll, she thinks, have to dress the doll. "But I don't want to -- not yet." She cannot bear the thought of touching it. It had never seemed to live, had never been real to her. It was only a doll some people called a baby. Yet there was an eeriness about it; it was a thing that may have had the potential to be another thing -- a <u>live</u> thing. But all things are potentially something else, aren't they?

She is troubled by the presence of the doll, as she had been once before -- such a long time ago, it seems now. She is not supposed to feel any disturbance, any pain, yet the doll's presence threatens the peace of this second death. So she tries to put it out of her mind and lies back down on the couch. "The Polonnaise" begins. Her arms conduct an unseen orchestra.

"Look, she's conducting," says the second witness, who has stepped near the window to check on her progress.

"How nice," says the first witness, as she peeps inside.

"Nice," they agree as they stand at the doors.

"It's Chopin," says the first witness. "Just what she wanted."

"Doesn't she look pretty," says the other.

She is oblivious to them as she becomes entranced by the music. She continues to revel in it for what seems an age. The witnesses, tired of watching, take their seats again. Surely an hour has passed. They sit, mute and motionless for a silent eternity. Suddenly, the doors swing open. Her fingers, which hold the doors ajar, are translucently yellowish up to the knuckles. Her face shows distress, and the translucent yellowishness rings her eyes and outlines her lips.

"How can you be so inhuman!" she shouts near tears. "I cannot die alone -- not this time." The witnesses stand up. Quietly yet compassionately, they escort her into the chamber.

"Now, now, Don't you worry," says the first witness. "We'll stay with you."

"Yes, yes," they both coo gently, trying to soothe her. Neither face shows any sign of alarm. Both witnesses are apparently calm, but the second cannot help being somewhat moved. It is not quite right that she feels something, yet she does. She reaches out and hugs the young woman in the soft, frilly blouse, kissing her three times -- twice on the cheek, and once near the temple.

"There, there," says the second witness. "It will be all right. It won't be long now, I'm sure." This faint feeling seems to calm the young woman. Her face relaxes, the tension dissipates.

"I . . . I can't dress the doll . . I just . . . just can't," she says.

"It's all right. I will. Don't worry." The second witness walks over to the niche and dresses the doll in its pinafore, white and soft, and, as she is putting on its socks, she notices something. The cuffs on the socks are lacy and flower-printed, but the flowers on one are red, while the flowers on the other are brown.

The first witness, who has been observing the dressing ritual, approaches the niche. "It's all right," she whispers. "They won't bury the baby with her anyway. Put its shoes on and don't say anything." The second witness places the doll on the dressing table and returns with the first to the center of the room.

The young woman stretches out a translucent yellow hand to the second witness, which the latter clasps. The three of them stand and chat quietly.

"I feel so tired, suddenly," says the young woman.

"Perhaps you should lie down," says the first witness.

"Yes . . . yes. I think I should." As she nears the couch, her body slackens. Since the witnesses have her in tow, she does not collapse. They help her up onto the couch, where she lies down, quite exhausted, and now, nearly all yellow. All this time, the second witness never lets go of her hand. She holds it still. The young woman is now unable to speak.

The second witness senses something. She looks into the young woman's heavy-lidded eyes. The irises are lolling lazily up and down under the lids.

"Think the words you cannot say," says the second witness, "and I will hear them." The young woman, for only a moment, focuses on the second witness,

(continued)

smiles, and closes her eyes forever. The second witness walks over to the niche, picks up the doll, and brings it to the dead woman's side, making a cradle for it in her still-flexible, left arm. After the stiffness settles into the young woman's body, her left arm will remain crooked just so, in a cradle position, whether they bury the baby with her or not.

The first witness begins to weep. The second's face seems impassive. But she had heard the words, and there was no pain in them, no agony of separation, no regret. She smiles.

"No. There are no words. There were no words the first time -- only a too empty aloneness. I am not alone this time. I know of no better worlds to which I might fly, and so, I leave in peace, facing a comfortable void.

"Goodbye, my friends."

****

Mart Dickinson & David Moore

EPILOGUE TO A MYSTERIOUS NOVEL

This is the last page of this book,
beware smiling dogs,
Don't touch it . . . it's evil
And Humpty Dumpty fell from the wall
Look into his yolk stained eyes,
The yellow oozing from the cracks
Sweep him up,
Tape him together,
Oops! Don't forget the naughty bits
Stupid! You got it on backwards
Life is backwards
Backwards is life
This is the first page of this book,
beware of frowning dogs . . .
Touch it . . . it feels so good
The sky goddess descends
Look into her brilliant green eyes
Rainbows issue from the orbs,
broken down into components of energy
The mind flies freely
Oh no! It left the id behind
Fool! The aura has been scrambled
Death goes forward
Forward goes Death
This is the last page of this book
Beware the smiling dogs
As they phase into limbo
Leaving luminous, grinning fangs,
and rabies

****

Michael A. Stillman

DAVID CARTAPH, WANDERER

David Cartaph woke up and rubbed his eyes. "Sunny and less humid today, with highs in the upper 70's," announced the clock-radio on the nightstand, blinking 7:30 a.m. He shut it off and padded to the bathroom.

The tile felt cool under his feet as he stretched and remembered his appointment with Tynsdale. His bleary eyes looked into the hinged mirror, splattered with the toothpaste of a casual bachelor, and he tried to recall his interrupted dream. He opened the medicine cabinet and expl--

David Cartaph woke up and rubbed his eyes. He shut off his alarm clock at 7:24 and considered trying to recapture the dream that had been abruptly cut off. He decided against it and padded to the bathroom.

The tile felt cool under his feet as he stretched and thought about the morning appointments. With a glance into the splattered mirror, he opened

(continued)

David Cartaph, Wanderer, continued

the medicine cabinet and expl--

David Cartaph woke up and rubbed his eyes. He turned the radio on, and it boomed the sermon of a fundamentalist preacher, voice dripping with righteousness. "Yes, my brethren, we all know the story of the Wandering Jew. Let us learn from his example. Because he blasphemed, the Lord Jesus on the road to Calvary, he is doomed to wander an eternity, through all of time and--"

Space, he thought, as he turned off the radio. Time and Space. The matrix in which I live my life. Well, Space is certainly more important than Time, especially on my day off. Maybe I can have another good dream.

Deciding to go back to sleep, he straightened the pillow, turned over and expl--

David Cartaph woke up and rubbed his eyes. The clock-radio had interrupted a particularly enjoyable dream with an obnoxious chorus of dogs yelping "Jingle Bells". He tried to recall the date while he stumbled to the bathroom.

He kicked off his slippers and squinted into the mirror, wondering about the day's schedule. He opened the medicine cabinet and expl--

David Cartaph woke up and rubbed his eyes. "Sunny and less humid today, with highs in the mid 70's, and no rain in the forecast," said the clock-radio in a pleasant baritone. He noted the time, 9:10, as he padded to the bathroom.

The tile felt cool under his feet as he wondered what time his wife would wake up. His bleary and reddened eyes squinted into the mirror. He opened the medicine cabinet and explored the cluttered shelves, looking for something to clear his head. Picking out a small brown bottle that he hadn't noticed before, he unscrewed the lid and expl --

David Cartaph woke up and rubbed his eyes. Glancing at the clock, he rolled over and went back to dream.

He stood on an ocean of pebbles, cool and placid. He was buried to his knees, and alone except for the bird circling overhead and the Sun diffusing through the fog.

Picking up a handful of the stones, he noticed that each tiny globe had its own pattern of irregularities and pockmarks. He wondered if perfection would make each gray pebble into an identical sphere, erasing its individuality.

Thunder pulsated across the landscape and through his temples. He was blinded as he looked up at the Sun, impossibly large now on the ceiling of the sky. Its brilliance grew and then it plummeted screaming out of the heavens, directly at him. He tried to run as the Sun expl--

David Cartaph woke up and rubbed his eyes. He got out of bed and stretched, reaching for the ceiling and yawning. He glanced out the window and noticed that the house across the street still had its porch light on. He turned and padded to the bathroom.

The wooden floor felt hard under his feet as he gazed into the hinged mirror, splattered with the toothpaste of a casual bachelor. He opened the medicine cabinet and exploded into dozens of fragments, which splattered across the walls, floor, ceiling, and mirror. As the echoes died, someone turned off the porch light across the street.

David Cartaph woke up and rubbed his eyes. He rolled out of bed and expl--

****

Judy Belfield

MA

"Ma's crazy,"
we all say
as we feel her apron strings
flutter about our hearts --
and we grab hold
to follow where she flies.
And though she never owned an apron,
we see her in all the living rooms
of our yesterdays,
cracking chewing gum
in her world of books
and family
and art.
We hear her lunatic cackle
as she slaps her thighs
and stomps her feet
when the snickerbug bites --
but we also hear tears that crash
like the ocean's resounding fury --
and we remember
as though they were our own.
There are words we've never said,
and words we've never heard --
but they were only baubles
we never needed.

****

Kathy Heller

REFLECTIONS IN A NURSING HOME MIRROR

This mirror must be cloudy!
(Oh, that reminds me! I must get new glasses soon,
...my dentures tightened...my aid retuned...)
Who's looking back at me??
She looks a bit like me, I see,
and very much like my mother.
But I don't look like that --
she's old --
I'm still the same, I'm still me,
just like when I was 33, and 53, and 63.
I'm me, and I will always be
the same. This body's cheating me.

I have no regrets.
I've done it all...I went to school --
I married well --(I was no fool!)- but
My children were my precious jewels;
When they left home I took a job.
We were alone, then, Ben and I.
We didn't talk much, what's left to say?
I always knew that he'd die
first -- he'd never get along without me.
It seems a lifetime since last May.
God! I wish that I could say "I loved you" and know that he'd hear me!

I moved in with my children --
where else would I go?
first with Jenny...
then with Joe...
But it didn't work out.
Too noisy, you know.
It wasn't meant to be.
Actually, it seemed all right to me.
The little ones were such a joy --
two little girls, one little boy
who looks just like his mother.
There is no better gift in life
Than the time we gave each other.
We'd go for walks; we'd make mud pies;
We'd tell silly, nonsense lies.
When Kim fell down, she'd always cry
until I came to kiss her.
Now, if she'd come visit me
I'd tell her how I miss her.

We're a lot alike -- the kids and me --
Their parents have no time, you see
to listen -- though they talk at us,
and tell us what to do.
Don't their ears work?
Just their tongues?
Things sure have changed since we were young.
Ben, they didn't learn that from us.

Then, things got strange.
Lord! What a change!
I really lost control --
I'd laugh, then cry -- I don't know why!
(I tell you, friend -- and I don't lie! --
if you can, then you should try
to never let yourself grow old.)
I'd wet myself -- just like the kids!
-then think "Shame on me for what I did."
But these tears are not for me -- not yet --
they're for little bottoms I spanked when wet.
Why is there shame for "no control"?
Why do we punish the young, or old?
We try to do as we are told...
We'd be dry, if we could be.

What happened?
Did some Halloween witch
come along and make the switch?
I can't tell now which is which --
Am I daughter? Am I mother?
When did I become the other?

Sometimes I think that I'm not real --
my ears don't hear, my skin can't feel --
Maybe that's why my tears won't heal.
Why won't they dry up too?
Now the "highs" come easier, and the "lows"; it's just that I don't show it.
I don't want the kids to know it.

I used to think -- if you lived life right --
you'd be at peace...you'd sleep at night.
Now I'm not sure that I was right
and sometimes I'm afraid.
The nights are long. So are the days.
The songs I used to sing in praise
are disconnected phrase by phrase
and take on different meaning.
Was it all a joke? To keep us in line?
We'd have our babies, do our jobs
with faith our painkiller, our wine --
Dear God! smother thoughts like mine!
I need <u>you</u> to be real!
within my soul, at least, I still can feel.

"We want you to be happy, Mom," they say,
when they come to visit me each fourth Sunday,
and so I am.
I smile (so that they'll stay).
They'll never see <u>me</u> cry.

Isn't it time yet to die?

They never even kiss me.
I'm the only one who'll ever miss me.

****

Judy Belfield

DEATHWATCH

Clustered together in darkness,
night-shadowed and swell-bellied with rain,
the trees groan
as a wet wind moans,
and their arthritic fingers crack
with the sign language
which tries to tell the tragic secret
known by the birds and field mice
who scattered insanely away
when deathscreams shattered their waking rituals
at daybreak yesterday.
A sneakered foot lays silent
on the dank, black soil,
which sucked away an ocean of blood
from the child who was but a dewdrop,
and slick, green leaves twitch, flutter,
and pass by the face twisted in terror,
its gaping eyes seeing nothing
but an eternal void --
no yesterdays to tantalize,
nor daisy-chained tomorrows,
but only drunken earth beneath,
belching forth its beetles and worms.
The trees wear weeds and wail --
waiting and watching,
they stand in the moonless night,
their feet entangled with decay,
and there will be no consolation
when the sunlight filters through.

****

The Underground Poetry League, Ltd.

WELCOME TO THE UNDERGROUND

Deep...
Deep within the bowels
Of our earthly prison
There is
A creature.

Solitude
Is his constant test
And the silence
Is the only music
On his imaginary stereo dial.

The only men
He could've ever
Broken his silence with
Untimely
Dead.

Day to day
He might write
A verse --
A line...
For no one.

On his door
For no one
A sign reads:

"Welcome to the underground."

****

Bob Frederick

LIFE . . .

Trying to be free
Hoping to be loved --
Not feared --
Hollow
and angry

****

R. Walser Yale

LOST IN MESSAGES

Lost in messages
No place for the musical
Sound of interconnecting
Consonants and vowels
Of beautiful, simplistic
Enormity.

Grasp the beauty.
Grapple with love.
Let the wonder
Of each secret
Body slam the abstraction
Of your mind.

Then, numb --
Stand,
Shake,
Gasp -- and applaud
The burlesque spectacle
Of life.

And with a sedative
Broom of passing years
Gently sweep away
Your salty tears
Into cloudy pools
Of yesterdays.

****

J. D. Guse

SLOGAN FOR JUDY B.

Nobody's right
And Nobody's wrong
Cause people with imaginations
Keep affecting the picture.

****

David Moore

SOLIPSIST SONG

Echoes, echoes, echoes, echoes in the darkness
Bouncing against dead-end alley ways
Howling against the solid back-drop
Blinding all those vulnerable perceptions

!!! Let There Be Light !!!

All the world is a sphere
And all the men and women merely projections
Of this roughshod, rumpled mind
dancing before my solitary existence
Puppets on my psychic strings
For I am the lord, my god
I am so bored, I'm god
Ho hum
Like wow man, I'm god today
So I just sit around watching the tube
Altering the scores slightly
And changing the random script in idiot ways
Guaranteed to confuse the pulpy brains
Of my frivolous characters
Who have no independence
Who are merely regurgitations
Of my nauseated inner self
For I have been withering with illness
The nonsense of my life
A madness that slithers through my mentality
And spews out, gushing into reality
I am that reality
Nothing has objective existence
Because I cannot prove that the All
Can "be" without Me
Everything is spawned in the cool clear void
By my Will alone
I'm god today
Even on Sundays
I watch my
football

****

Judy Belfield

THIS GRAY HOUR

This gray hour
is like a velvet coverlet,
enveloping me in its soft sadness,
suffocating my heart --
I cannot feel,
and so my pen sheds tears.
The hour will soon be gone,
but its essence is trapped
in fragile, tissue wrappings --
a gift to myself
for some future night
when all is quiet and dark
and purple and alone
and endlessly reflective.
Then, perhaps,
I shall be able to weep.

****

R. Walser Yale

LITTLE TENT

The earth is a pup tent
Near the mansion
Of eternity.

How we love to sit
In our little tent
And marvel
At its four clever walls
And its door
That neatly zips shut.

We bask
In its filtered sunglight
In the name of wisdom.
We laugh --
We spoiled
Who zipped out
The one who pitched it.

We think we're roughing it,
But we're only children
Playing in a numb little tent
In eternity's backyard.

****

Bob Frederick

THE DARK MUSE

Warm and bright, as
midnight skies
In my arms, the
Dark muse lies

Siren of the
Endless night
Answer to my
mortal plight.

Beautiful for
all to see
Skin of purest
Ebony

Much more lovely
Than the rest
Let me suckle
at your breast

Unmatched beauty
you possess
Take me in your
warm caress

Loving you with
my last breath
Make me yours
beloved Death.

****

Norma D. Plume

SHADOWS DANCING

Shadows in the doorways of my mind
Floating just beyond touch, within thought;
Shadows with glittering gold bands
Upon their misty fingers.

Elusive personalities of my past,
Haunting my hesitant emotions
Wearing those damned rings
To shine throughout my dreams.

Wish that I could close those doors,
Shut out those cold wraiths of my past,
Deprive them the ecstasy
Of my pain.

****

Adriane Saylor

IN MEMORIAM, WE...

Why do we gather here
faced as we are with the unliving reality
of a life taken from us this untimely hour?
Who do we come to mourn
in this place filled with memories and
done up with wreaths of tears interwoven
with the roses of life?
Who are we burying in this earth
still wet with rain and even now
giving birth as we return this corpse
to its arms;
Why are we come here to bear this once warm flesh
before these eyes of men and women who
must go on
in spite of this diminished spirit and this
sudden fear?
We gather here to say to ourselves there is
a reason,
we hope together for safe passage for our
comrade who has left
our lives to open wide the door we only
glimpse in dreaming
and relinquish as we wake.
We mourn our days so short and so long
and so suddenly sweet because they are
all we have.
We come knowing that we die,
believing as we put the dead away from sight
that we live more gloriously than they.
We put stones on our eyes and turn down our dreams...

****

David Moore

SOUL SERIES A

A soul, a soul!
Wind-up war machine
to be pitted against society --
the plenum that is barren

Bob Frederick

JANUARY 16, 1982

Almost twenty-three
My only friend the road
Why do I still pretend
It's worth it
Chasing illusions

****

David Moore

ON THE FRINGES OF A FINAL AGONY

how rude
after all that time we invested in you
and your brains out you blew
go slow go slow go slow
and up the pieces pick
poke them softly with a stick
but with a ten foot pole
touch not the soft and
quivering mass
of ravaged psyche lapping up
the juices of misery
you chewed off more than you could
bite my nameless friend
so you seek a final end
by twisting round the bend
want not what you waste lest
you hatch the counted chickens

to love discord
with calm accord
as they burn french postcards

for one knows to take one
what else said be needed??

****

(continued)

Soul Series A, continued

Set my toy free
Let the explosive tension that energizes it
propel it over the rocky plateaus and mountains
of Imagination and Experience
until it grinds itself to dust
against the blank faces of unyielding stone
of reality in-itself
on the shelf

Souls! Souls!
Wage battle 'gainst each other
on the mountaintops unmovingly unaware
With allies, and even alone
Trying to find Wisdom's bones
Caught in a swirl
Fly through a whirl
Of chaotic, drifting life

And we descend from this desert Valhalla
All battered and weary
will another be there to offer hope
unto those too tired to embrace it

II

Why have you stolen my soul?
It was such a funny little trinket
I kept it locked in a stainless steel vault
With my plastic army soldiers
And petrified wood
But now and again I would tenderly remove it
And play with it
And cuddle it
Even though it was a useless relic
Obsolete in today's moralized decadence

But you
Oh great three-eyed lizard lord
Spawned in the prime of the evil sameness
Came and spirited away my toy soul
And took it to your pyramid temple
That squatted Maya-like on an unreal island
Floating 'cross emerald waters calmly

Why have you stolen my soul?

You have so many of them already
Little balls of blazing life-force
Used as book-ends to prop up
Your ancient, dark, and meaningless tomes
Purloined from the private libraries
Of black and brooding cosmic entities
My poor little soul!
My poor little soul!
Now a book marker for a chortling reptile

III

(Monologue of the 4-eyed lizard lord)

"I collect souls you know. I got whole heaps of 'em back at the temple. My closets are stuffed full of souls that I picked up hither and thither in all sorts of odd places. I keep the higher quality in big piles out in plain sight, even when visitors stop by for afternoon tea. They envy my collection of souls, having none of their own. But then, these friends of mine don't know where to look. You have to hunt through the garbage dumps and trash bins of the race called man. There's all sorts of discarded souls lying around. But sometimes you have to steal them. You see, a few human beings actually cherish their souls. They keep them locked up in tiny, dark safe places so the poor things can't go out and play in the traffic. But these souls cannot be protected from me, just from life. I am master soul thief after all, and thus I creep away with yet another prize under my arm. I am quite pleased with myself under such conditions, the

(continued)

thrill of the chase coursing through my veins. Sometimes I even have my best souls put in stasis, stuffed and mounted so to speak, and placed in my game room.

"Well, I must go now. I have important projects to attend to. Ta-ta, and happy hunting!"

****

Adriane Saylor

SHE CHANGES

Something startled her, a faint sound, barely perceptible, but enough to make her eyes focus. Ah, she thought it is the dream again. Her pulse filled the tiny world of her sleep, growing, meshing, until sound was motion. Ah, she thought, now it will happen, now, now! From some vantage point she saw the beast, moonwhite, perfect in the lush forest. He pawed the earth, sending ripples through her sleeping body. Her heart hammered in her chest and her mouth was dry. Invisible, she approached the magnificent beast. Sometimes it was white, as it was tonight, other times it was the color of caramel candy.

Little puffs of white blew from its nostrils and she wondered if it was cold. She couldn't see herself, but she knew she was smiling, knew her eyes gleamed in the beams of moonlight that illuminated the beautiful horse. Horse, that was what it was! She wanted to ride, yes, she would ride, forever, she wouldn't come back this time. The horse raised its head, fixing her with its charcoal colored eyes, milk-white mane flipping and falling back to the misty colored neck. Strange, this part of the dream. Always the same. She mounted the horse, but she never saw herself riding. There was the powerful beats of his heart, the heat, the empty/dropping feeling when she started the climb and rounded the darkness and came into the little clearing. Then, there was the exhilaration, the total orgasmic joy as the light fell on him and she saw fully how magnificent, how perfect, how ideal he was. Yet, she never saw herself. At the time though she never wondered about it, just enjoyed, voyeuristically seeing the muscles bunch under the fluid skin, the beads of sweat jewellike in the light of the clearing.

It was always ever too soon. He'd simply vanish, and with him the clearing, the night. It left her strangely sad, to wake up, tangled in the sheets, her eyes trying to shut out the daylight, the light he could not exist in. She always awoke at the same time, the time of morning when the last star was winking in her window. Her eyes feasted on the pale orange at the bottom of the beginning aqua and the receeding violet. Sometimes she sat for the full hour and let her eyes be filled and then dazzled by the brilliance of the sun exploding over the blue lip of the sky. Occasionally she'd go back to sleep, but he never came back and when she woke up, the house was full of light and she had to get out of bed.

She'd spend the day haunted, distracted, barely listening to the world sounds around her. She searched for proof, little out of place occurrences that would let him exist in her world of blare and light. She looked for someone who reminded her of his naked beauty. She rode the bus to and from

(continued)

Judy Belfield

HER EYES CARRY THE TRAGEDY

Her eyes carry the tragedy
like a smoke-tinted glass box held high
for all to step up near enough and see
the aching,
futile aching,
once a desperate agony --
a fatal vivisection --
healed over now,
but like the liar sea,
its fluttering face rippling gently,
while all the rages of hell beset its belly.
Her eyes, like smoke, like glass,
like neverending, wispy, floating curlicues,
yet like jagged, sharp, shattered crystal,
whisper a wordless aching --
there are no phrases left to tell the tears
that bled with screams
down the walls of her soul --
the tears,
now stayed within a deathstained chamber.
Still she weeps where no eye sees,
years after,
and years after those,
until her eyelids drop suddenly,
and close the secret over forever.

****

work in a kind of dreamy daze, listening to the beautiful sound of her breathing, her heart, her blood going through her body on its red mission of life.

Once, she stopped before a department store window to look at a picture of a unicorn. It was a cheap imitation of a famous print, but she was mesmerized. She barely noticed when a man came to the window and removed the picture, replacing it with one of a bikini-clad woman who smiled at her defiantly from the middle of a group of other bikini-clad women. She caught the eyes of the man before he went away. His eyes were blue, the color of a wool sweater she had once owned, but there was no warmth in these eyes. He still held the picture of the unicorn, and when he saw her interest, he appeared to drop it, laughing when her eyes followed his motion. Her face burned, and she looked down at the sidewalk. A couple of men passed, glancing at her and at the picture in the window. She pulled up the collar of her coat and hurried away. She walked for a couple of blocks, letting the cold air dispel her unaccountable shame and her sudden anger. The image of the unicorn burned in her mind. She thought of going back to the store, ignored it, once turned, then turned again following a huddle of people into a restaurant she often went to.

The warmth and moist smells of corned beef and the tangy smell of mustard cut into her chilled nostrils and seemed to go straight to her stomach. She stood at the edge of the deli, feeling her toes inside of her boots tingle with regained warmth. Her eyes searched the crowd, focusing on no one in particular. Always she hoped she'd find...what, someone different, someone who gleamed. She walked slowly to the booth she always chose, the one nearest the back, with the gold-veined mirror that caught all of the conversation and false opulence of the lunchtime office crowd. She stared immobile and unmoved at the sleek heads of the secretaries, their mouths like red plastic balloons. They pouted over their coffee, and bit into the delicate croisaants with long white teeth too perfect for belief. With them, were their polished twins, men who inhaled the grey air they blew officiously into the room from slim white cigarettes that appeared in their manicured hands from nowhere it seemed. The buzz of business hummed around her and eventually faded into one monotonous tone, punctuated sometimes by the shrill giggle or the rough chuckle of a businessperson. The waitress came to take her order. She read the menu without seeing it, looking for something that wasn't there. A drink from Xanadu, an exotic taste that would take her to the clearing again and fill her with its luxuriant light. The waitress stood with her pad and pencil waiting, trying to get a look at herself, surreptitiously, in the mirror.

Eventually the menu slid to the table, producing no magical dishes, just the usual reuben sandwich, fish sandwich with swiss cheese; she'd thought that was different when she first ordered it, and sometimes an eclair for dessert. Today she might order the crab salad. The elegant women who came in with their silver haired companions, who smoked the colored cigarettes and left little pink lip-prints on the coffee cups ordered that. She sat at the back of the delicatessen and watched them come in, floating on a wave of expensive perfume. They'd stop in the center of the room, letting all eyes take in the plush coats they wore and the eyes would glitter, adding up the prices, prices, prices of the jewels on the strangely youthful necks and arms. Then the white beauties would sink into the varnished chairs, and immediately the waitress would appear to take the order that would always be crab salad and iced tea. The pink meat went into the pastel mouths bite by carefully taken bite and glide down the long necks like pieces of paradise, followed by a sip of cold iced tea, even in March.

"I'll have the crab salad and iced tea today," She said the words precisely.

"Sorry, we're out of that, how about..." She looked the waitress up and down the way she'd seen the secretaries do, but stopped when she came to the silent, glazed stare. It wasn't her fault she could not produce ambrosia for this stranded woman. She smiled and glanced over the sleek heads again, found a litter of something that looked appealing on one of the tables that had just been vacated by two startlingly handsome businesspeople.

"I'll have what they, what she had." She closed the menu and the waitress swished away. She relaxed into the cushioned protection of the booth and let her eyes travel the room. Never watching the time, she pretended she would never go back to work, would just vanish and never be heard of again. She was thinking of where she'd go, when the waitress suddenly appeared at her table. She was trying to hide a blush that bloomed on her fragile skin, as she proffered a slim, white envelope. It fell to the table and rested there, as cool as a snowflake, a faint gleam illuminating it. The heartbeat again, the sound of hooves.

"Will you join me?" was the message on the single white card. It looked engraved, considered, as if much time had gone into carving the delicate writing on the polished face of the card. Yet, it seemed so spontaneous. She smiled, her eyes darting around the room.

The salad arrived and she barely tasted the tuna that filled her mouth, or the cold tea that raced behind it like an icy river. She was searching for him, for the gleaming dream.

(continued)

She Changes, continued

By the time she finished, the sound of her heart was all she heard. If the waitress had not glared at her before she left, she'd have slipped out without paying. She squeezed out of the moist, pungent atmosphere of the delicatessen and into the bitingly cold day.

The note danced in her pocket, it skipped, it hummed, telling of wonders she let fill her mind. She swirled, ignoring all who turned to watch her progress down the sidewalk. She would not go back to the office, she would not go home, she...

A gleam in the middle of a crowd, the sound of hooves pounding pavement.

"Wait, wait, I've come. Wait!" Running, running, cold air pushing in, pushing out warmth. A red glaze, a yellow ribbon, her sight going, going out. A sound of hooves.

"Lady, wait, lady..." The charcoal eyes fixed her, warm and inviting, she went.

"...never even saw me, never even saw me..."

Now she could see who she was. She was a naked, slim woman with hair the color of mist and a powerful body beneath her. She saw orange light approaching and knew she had to run. She touched her foot to the earth and felt it crunch and give way. A sound startled her and suddenly, the trees were rushing past her, but this time, she knew who was carrying her into the brilliant glare of the clearing. It was herself.

****

Michael A. Stillman

TO A JEALOUS FRIEND

Infer an implication,
Was it just imagination,
Did you really hear your love go
Splat?

But you say you're the best,
Ahead of all the rest,
Can you really fit your head into a
Hat?

Is trust a word on a bank,
A type of girdle for the flank,
An accusation when the spark goes
Flat?

You think she's just a prancer,
Paranoia enhancer,
And it won't last long like
That --

Splat?

****

R. Walser Yale

LOVE -- THE WOMAN

Love is not responsible.
She is reckless.

She is obstinate
Not patient.
No.
Patiently
Obstinate.

She gives Hell
To those who
Would suppress her.

And who am I
To tell the woman
I don't need her?

****

M. E.

UNTITLED

Relationships come
    and relationships go
But what of a
  "Lasting friendship"

I feel the first breeze of Spring
    But I shiver
At the cold and lonely prospect
    Of facing tomorrow
Without the ones
    Who I assumed, falsely,
Needed my company

"Be there when I need you"

Love is blind
    But lust is bloody deaf
Unminding of the cries
    Of its bystanders

One,
    And sometimes all
Are forsaken for another
    Without regard to
Mental anguish
    Or other such
Unimportant emotions . . .

****

J. D. Guse

OBSERVATION #37

There's a woman over there
    Enjoying the company of her friends.
She shows a smile
    Of warmth and acceptance.
It hurts
    To see you trapped
By friends
    Who have their own needs to fulfill.
Freedom never comes to those
    Who wait for it to whisk them away.
It is there for the taking.

****

Adriane Saylor

FLYING

I could believe I had wings,
and that I was soaring, lost among
the clouds like a leaf blown on an
updraft from the ground;
I could believe that I was part of
the golden thread of the sun that
loops down and hooks my eyes so
that I must follow upward, searching when
it disappears in a sky hole.
I could believe that I am not a body
on the earth at all, that I am just a dream,
a heart endlessly beating love,
endlessly loving, endlessly leaping toward
the joy that love may bring,
and plunging from the inescapable pain.
I can know that I am just a feeling,
coursing in the wind of a beautiful moment,
And hold onto it for its sweet brevity,
until it dies.
I can know that I share the world with you
and your dreams and your aspirations and
your heartbeat and your breath blown out
in praise of the same beauty I can see.
I can touch the string of a kite and
be electrified and flown away,
knowing that somewhere, you are dreaming too...

****

J. D. Guse

SHERI'S SONG
(WITH NO MELODY AS OF YET)

Within my mind
is a dark tunnel
with cob-webbed frames
with remembrances inside.
Each frame holds a picture.
Each picture holds a smile.
Each smile holds a memory,
And the memories are not pleasant.

They tell of times when I was:
too ignorant to abide friendship
too overpowering with love
too understanding of rejection.

But somehow it seems fitting
that one dusty portrait
is wiped clean of all its cob-webs.
And her day-glow smile
and sunburst eyes
come bursting through the bureaucracies
of my life.

She has power . . .
. . . jumper cables for my dead poetic
battery.
She is the twinkling morning star at sun-
rise,
pulling the sun up off the horizon,
and letting him know
that his warmth can be known to others
if only his fires burn bright enough within.
Thank you, Sheri.

****

J. D. Guse

CHRISTMAS WITH NO NEW YEAR IN SIGHT

I'm having myself a merry little
Christmas
even without her here.
Although the physical could not attend,
there is a lasting imprint,
a perfection of sorts;
like the angels we made
like the presents we gave
like the songs that we sang;
they all hold tight inside my head.
I am more relieved that they do.

I wish that winter would last forever,
because I never want
the angels she made
in the snow of my mind
to melt away.

****

M. E.

LEIGH

Hold your head high,
Little one,
And you stand
Tall as the trees
For no heart beats
So very strong with love
As this one
Within you.

****

Michael A. Stillman and
Melissa Wessell

COUNTERPOINT

So little
comes around.

I remember
A night of sanity.
Was it the earth's,
Or was it the sky's,
Or was it the sparks
As we grew together
In the same room?

****

Matthew Hennessy

THE ORB

I had been riding almost all night, when suddenly I saw a campfire ahead. I cautiously approached the camp. The camp was by aspens, but I was close enough to see it now.

I dismounted and drew my laser pistol from my holster. I stealthily worked my way through the trees, until I was standing at the perimeter of the camp. I noticed a man squatting near the fire. He was cradling a cup of coffee in his hands, his back to me.

I started forward again, when suddenly his voice stopped me. He spoke softly, but his voice carried easily in the night air. He said, "how's about putting your laser away and having a cup of coffee with me?"

This was totally unexpected. I didn't know what to do. So, after thinking for a few seconds, I holstered my laser, and took a seat across the fire from him. He stood to pour my coffee, and I noticed that his right arm was bandaged in a primitive sling. Evidently, he hadn't done a good job of stopping the bleeding. The bandages and the sling were soaked with blood.

After he poured my coffee I sipped it and studied him. He was dressed plainly, in an animal skin shirt and leather pants. He also wore a long black cape. I would have guessed his age at about fifty. His face was weathered, and he looked like he hadn't shaved in a week. I could tell the man was intelligent though because there was no carbon build-up on his laser. He may not shave, but he cares for his weapon.

I realized that my coffee cup was empty and was about to fill it when he started to speak to me. He said, "I've been waiting for you for about two hours. I didn't think that you would make it."

"What are you talking about, Mr.?" I replied.

"I knew you'd be coming, the Orb told me you would. The moment that I was wounded I knew my time was short." After saying this, he attempted to stand but he couldn't. He slumped to the ground and started hacking. I stepped around the fire and propped him up with his bedroll. He started coughing again, and I could see flecks of blood on his lips. I unbuttoned his shirt. His chest was covered with blood, coming from a wound just left of the sternum.

I ripped off a piece of his shirt and used this to plug up the hole. He winced and said, "Damn if that don't hurt. The old body aint what she used to be."

"Old man, what were you saying before, about knowing that I would be coming? Who shot you?"

The old man reached into his shirt and took out a small sphere. It was about the size of a marble. "This is the Orb of Evil!" he exclaimed. "Every year on this day we meet, and he attempts to take it from me. You see, in the hands of good, it is dormant. However, if he were to get his hands on it it would release all the evil that mankind has ever known."

"I still don't understand. Who is he?"

The old man started gasping and his body was racked by another spasm of coughing. I reached over and picked up his coffee cup. I gently pressed it to his lips. He soon stopped coughing, but I noticed his breathing was labored. His voice was rough like sandpaper when he spoke again. "He, is the Devil! You see, every year on this day he is released from Hell. When he is released he seeks out the possessor of the Orb. Whoever possesses it must defeat him, in order to stop it from falling into the ownership of the Devil."

I looked at him in disbelief. "You're crazy! Besides, what has that got to do with me?"

He stared at me for a few seconds before replying. "It is time for me to pass the Orb on. I am growing old, my reflexes are not what they used to be. I have served the Orb for the past thirty years. I received it here thirty years ago. So, it is only fitting that I pass it on here before I die."

With that he grasped my hand and pressed the Orb into it. His hands were cold, but once he withdrew them I could feel a warmth emanating from the Orb.

"Don't fight it. You don't have the time! Even as we speak 'he' approaches. You should get some rest. You will need all of your strength. Take my cape. It will protect you."

I knelt by the old man, and gently removed his cape. He gripped my shoulder when I had the cape. "When you hear the dogs you will know he is here."

I stood up and walked to where I had left my droid horse. I walked him closer to the camp and removed my saddle and bedroll. Then I switched the horses alarm system and set his dial at rest. The horse lowered its mechanical head and appeared to sleep. I had turned his power down so that I wouldn't have to recharge his batteries.

I laid my bedroll about fifteen feet from the fire. Before curling up in the bag to sleep, I checked the old man. His breathing seemed less labored, and he was snoring. So I hit the hay.

I tossed and turned for what seemed the entire night. However, when I awoke I realized that I had only been asleep for a few hours. I rolled over and noticed that the fire had burned down to embers.

I got out of bed and began gathering wood for the fire. As I was doing

(continued)

this I thought that I heard a barking in the distance. I shrugged it off though and continued to gather wood.

Soon, I had the fire blazing and a fresh pot of coffee brewing. I was about to ask the old man if he wanted a cup when I heard the dogs again. This time, the first dog was joined by a second dog, and they were unmistakably getting closer.

I dropped my cup and ran to the old man's bed. "Hurry, old man! They are coming!" I rolled him over and realized that he was dead. I pulled a blanket over him and quickly crossed to my bedroll.

I strapped on my laser pistol and the old man's cape. I was about to roll up my bed when something caught my eye. Lying on top of the bed was the Orb. I stared at it undecidedly until I heard the dogs again. They seemed to be just outside of camp.

I snatched it up in my hand and turned. At the edge of camp there were two large black dogs with glowing eyes. The dogs moved apart slightly, and a tall figure in a flowing red robe stepped in. He wore a hood that covered his face. All I could see were two glowing eyes, like the dogs.

His voice sent a cold chill down my spine. "Boy, I've come for the Orb! Are you going to let me have it or will I have to take it?"

I could feel the Orb heating up as I spoke. "I'm afraid that I can't just let you have it."

He took a few steps to his right and spoke. "Look boy, I don't want to hurt you. How about if we make a deal? If you give me the Orb I promise to let you go without hurting you. What do you say?"

I glanced at the motionless figure of the old man. I flipped my cape over my shoulder and smiled as I spoke, "Go to Hell!"

The devil went for his laser. A fraction of a second later my hand was a blur of motion as I palmed my laser. He was leveling his laser and staggered backwards. I fired again hitting him between the eyes.

He dropped to one knee and then slowly rose to his feet. As he rose his laser pistol flew from the ground into his hand. We stood facing each other. He slowly holstered his pistol and walked to the dogs at the edge of the camp.

"You have defeated me this year. Maybe next year YOU will go to Hell instead of me."

He disappeared in a cloud of blue smoke. I heard the howling of the dogs as they receeded into the darkness. Perhaps he was right. Maybe next year I would be in Hell.

****

Judy Belfield

AQUARIUS WANING

This blistering wind
spits rainfire furiously in our faces --
like a raging goddess
bitching at the cosmos,
her voice resounding
to the far corners of Canis Major,
her effusion spluttering fiercely
in infinite directions.
This frenzied wind,
ensnared by the trees,
tears through their leafless limbs,
howling like a rabid dog --
a mad, ferocious wais
that threatens to shatter
all the crystal unicorns
and leave great gaping voids
in its wake.
Have we no refuge from destruction?
No Quasimodo to carry us to sanctuary?
Or shall the tempest seize our fragile souls,
like so many powder-winged moths,
And hurl them back into the prehistoric sea,
where they would,
blindly,
impale themselves
upon the prongs of genocide!

****

R. Walser Yale

THE VICTORY

Once upon a time
In a land far away
Lived a kingdom
Of people --
Children at play.

The visitors there
Found no sense
In their smiles

And soon dragged
Out cannons
Across the miles.

"Cease to play,
Or you'll smile no more."
So the people
Died.

They couldn't play
War.

****

Judy Delfield

THE BASTIONED BARONS

The bastioned barons
pent up in stone,
trapped in their phallic columns --
Ionic, Doric, Corinthian, whatever --
stand and command
the fealty of the rest.
They are like colossal colonnades
rising in formation,
indivisible,
against the sunset of a Parthenon sky --
yet their Golden Age lives on,
while they speak of liberty and justice
and tuck their bloodied buckses
somewhere in Geneva.
These rapscallion captains,
with their caps tilted rakishly,
affecting an air of commonness,
plan the destruction of numbers
which interfere with their balances
and wait for the robots
to come fill their coffers,
so coffin-production may be accelerated.
"Weed out, weed out!"
they scream without words
that fool most of the people
most of the time.
These are the times that pry men's souls,
rip them out with pliers and crowbars,
get rid of the excess,
trim the overpopulation down
to a stunning size five,
so the zeroes multiply in the banks.
Thse pillagers of society
ravage the corpses
that still twitch with the spasms
of some desperately tenacious hold.
And we grow so old in our silence.

****

Michael A. Stillman

ZEN-IMPRESSIONIST HAIKU

wild geese in flight
tomorrow's follow travellers
on an unused path

**

easter island dawn
sunlight sings on granite brow
tide rising again

**

the seagull gliding
upon a sunlight wavecrest
will you touch its cry?

**

beyond the flowers
cicada touches leaf-dew
and hears only stars

**

****

R. Walser Yale

DRY FACES FILL

Dry faces fill
My screen
With conservative
Doom and missiles
Of economy.

All their points
Sticking deep
In my veins
To replace my blood
With ice water.

See the business
At hand --
The numbers,
The plans,
Shrewd dark-suited
Smiles

And all the while
The fears of a nation
Sleep and hide,
Waiting for
The fifteen year
Backslide.

Evangelical hope --
I seek your light
But I hear your
Bitter cry:

Arm
A
Geddon.

****

earth's axis tilting
bluegill trapped beneath white ice
waits for greener times

**

your hand holds a disk
the polished mirror of the moon
how it becomes you

**

you: silly you that
always wants the world to change.
begin with yourself!

**

Judy Belfield

MIDAS WELL CAPITULATE

Drop your drawers
At the bureau of Inquiry --
A strip-search
Is going to peel away
That lacquer veneer.
Those scarlet letters,
Tied with ribbon,
And hidden in the corner,
Are about to be exposed.
Close the door --
It's abhorrent
How they find your little treasures,
Even buried fifty fathoms deep --
Deep in the heart of Davy Jones,
Who lives next door
With the wife and kids,
And can't keep up with the Smiths.
Those bedroom sachets,
All lavendar and oh-so-French-scented,
Can be rented by the hour --
Torn from the clock
Like last month's calendar page
In the Senate of Eternity --
These, too, shall pass away,
As they are examined,
Cross-examined,
And discarded
By the wool-gathering states' attorneys
Out in the pastures of justice.
Little do they know
There are pies in the grass,
And Charlie Chaplin's ready to fire
On the Smith Brothers,
Or Brother Smith, the chaplain.
A Fort Sumter affair:
White ties
And black tales of dead men,
Their waggling tongues rotting
In the grave
Like Old John Brown's body.
A nose is a nose,
And by any other name,
Would smell --
Would sniff like a disgusting dog,
Poking itself
Into unsuspecting crevices.
And so you ask if anything's sacred,
And well you may --
But all you'll hear in reply
Is the echo of your own voice:
You are a churchmouse
In the Cathedral of Saint Absurdity,
And a trap's been set
For your reserves.

****

R. Walser Yale

HIM

Nailed on a cross
Left for dead
Tight crown of thorns
Forced onto
His head.

Spit upon
Beaten
Denied
And destroyed.

The truth
Is something
We love
To avoid.

Y'All

****

Judy Belfield

PROPHETS AND LOST

Invest a lifetime dime
    in systematized credos
    which promise immortality --
Let your mind dip
    into the Wall Street pandemonium
    of souls,
and and gods,
    where the moneychangers guarantee profits,
    seers tell of gains in some other world,
    and brokers predict doom and gloom
        for all who will not buy in.
Listen to the Pharisees,
    hear the words that gush
        from their silver-spooned mouths --
    but remember the newsreels of 1929
    when the pie in the sky hit the pavement
        from twenty-fifth floor windows,
And wonder --
    always wonder . . .

****

David Moore

GARBLED GRANDEUR
(HOMEWARD BOUND)

Wave after wave
  Of charging solar cells
Bashing inward through dark doorways
Twirling dizzily beyond bleakness
Devouring dawnless domains

(continued)

Garbled Grandeur, continued

Scalding mortal remains
Scouring gory drains . . .
. . . Begin the chant, Gregor!

Twisting serpents sing with glee
Dancing vapors merrily
Moonlight glistens off grubby waves
Prophets wail from open graves
Winged lizards flying free
Soaring silent, open seas
Waving, screaming life they crave
Seeking softly to deprave
Awful armchairs burning bright
Grossly goading churning fright
Laughing boulders in the sky
Happy aardvark gonna die
Cruel maws just out of sight
Grinning teeth and candlelight
Glass elixirs never fly
Golden girls are very shy
Shoot to kill and many more
All this mess is a bloody bore

Hateful banshees scream like dogs
Sinking slowly in sour bogs
Listen softly to forgotten lore
Hiding, hiding the wounds are sore
Look down south at giant frogs
Munching, crunching rotting logs

"You're going mad," the doctor said
So I smashed him on the head
The brain was grey
And I must say
Never, never go all the way!

Ad Astra??

P.S. I'm the captian of my soul
Flowing, flowing with the glow

****

Adriane Saylor

THE WIND AND I

I walk out into the black dream of Creation,
as mere and humble under this scowl as the trees,
but
I do not bow down.
She digs in with spurs, this creature howling
at the windows like a tiger,
her thin hands race along the panes of glass
and try in vain to root me from my place,
but,
I will not be moved, I am a statue under
her steely-eyed gaze.
Instead, I turn and look directly into
the great gash that has opened gray above me,
and though she shows me her ugliest side,
I do not turn away.
With painful acuity, I probe this moan,
make it my own and spit it back at these
slate colored columns of anger.
We stand, the shadow, and her daughter,
born in an alchemic mitosis and abandoned
on the doorstep of the world.
I hug the warmth of black wool and turn coldly
to the business of being other than the storm,
and not quite of the world...

****

Bob Frederick

SUNDAY MORNING

Your smile
supple as a dancer
it glides across your face
shows a thousand thoughts
then gone without a trace.

****

R. Walser Yale

KITES OF MARCH

March arrived
Confused as ever --
Turned on children
With chapped face smiles
Flying kites
Despite the clouds.

Down in the park
A beautiful
Long-haired child
Played --
Softly radiant
Multicolored kite
Just lightly drifting
In the pre-April sky.

So to the park,
Clear blue kite
In hand,
This child ran
To place it high
In the windy skies
Of love.

Moved by her softly
Radiant colors,
He sent his kite up
For the girl to see --
So high it kissed
Infinity.

In the sky's
Abrupt azure
Transparency
His blue kite
Became a rainbow.

(continued)

Kites Of March, continued

"Up here girl,
I'm waiting --
Can't I bring
Your kite along?"

But the winds of March
The winds of love
For this girl
Grew too strong:

"If I let it out
It may blow away,
Never to return.
You see --
Controlling kites
In the stiff March winds
Is a skill I've yet to learn."

Then the wind died,
And the clouds grew
And through them fell
A kite of blue
Realities.

So March is leaving now --
Confused as ever.
Two confused children
Trying to fly
Separate kites
In the same grey sky.

****

Ernest McCabe

THE FALL AND DECLINE OF THE SPRINGTIME EMPIRE

Spring has long since past
No splendor or adornment remains
The trees stand huddled, stripped
Of life. The asthmatic vampire
Of impending winter has sunk
His wicked fangs deep into
The necks of the trees and
Drained their life into coffers
Deep below.
The harsh naked limbs with
Their bony fingers scratch
The sky or rattle on some
Vacant window pane.

****

David Moore

A CARNIVOROUS FANTASY

Mr. Greenwings is the ruler of the
crystal veldt
An insectoid entity whose essence is
wrapped in a
sophisticated, glimmering exoskeleton
His form sprouts intricate, black-veined
sky-sails
that propel this exotically bizarre
being
above his haunted domain
Multi-faceted rainbow optical sensors partake
of the contours
below
They magnify every detail
grossly distorting the insignificant
into undeserved vastness
But only in this way can the certainty of spotting the prey be assured
And at last it is located
A massive lumberlord undulating amongst the weeping vegetation
growing in the forgotten forest
Mr. Greenwings lunges
a shrieking dive whose vibrations seem to
shatter the local
space/time reality
like a brittle
wineglass
The hopeless lumberlord quivers and writhes
in unmentionably unbearable agony
as its neuro-system is liquified
Diamond hard talons of black onyx rip into this nullified biological mass
liberating vaporous life-force into the spiritual environment
And once again the ruler of the crystal veldt
draws sustenance from his helpless subjects.

****

R. Walser Yale

PRIMORDIAL REUNIONS

One bright winter
Afternoon
(The sun seemed high --
So did I)
Friends
In nature,
In a sudden
Magical
Excitability

(continued)

Primordial Reunions, continued

Strolled into the woods
For a reunion
With the primordial

Ignoring
Sacrilligious
Keep out signs
And barbed wire

We climbed up a hill
Through an ancient
Snow covered cemetery
Trying to read
The quiet weathered
Stones

We laughed
At the thought
Of cursing drivers
Spinning their wheels
Over paved woods

Man had never been
Where we were --
Here in God's playground
Sprinting after energetic
Life.

We came upon
A more serious threat
KEEP OFF
And rustier wire --
Further sacrilege.

We crossed
A Little line of trees.
Here now was man
At his best.

The overgrown
Foundational remains
Of some strange
Sewage plant

Pipes in the ground
And ancient brick,
Broken glass.
There beneath
The trash,
The foot printed,
Droppinged white --
Irridescent green.

Quite a beautiful scene.
Fantastically
Broken,
Decayed.

Crossing another hill
Swinging
Between limbs
We found more
Relics --
Orange, brown
Hollow drums

Some junk man's
Paradise.
Piles of antiquity
Seething with life.
How long ago
Had it crept here
To live and die
Forever?

Ghost farmers
Bundled against the cold
Pushed dead
And living plows
Here in the quiet
Of the wooded field.

Now here
We had found
A cut open barrel
Turned on its side
Half filled with
Ice.

There in the ice,
Submerged,
Head down,
Last breaths
Frozen
Into tiny pearls
Lay a rabbit
Waiting for spring.

We marveled
At his patience
And repose.
We stroked
The exposed fur
Of his young back.

Poor little rabbit
Waiting for spring.

Our reunion
With the primordial
Over
We quietly
Worked our way
Out of the trees.

Judy Belfield

THE COSMIC CONTINUUM

She is an old, old woman,
too old, perhaps,
yet she empties her womb continually of daylight.
Her arms are weary
of holding stars,
and though her breasts are withered,
she suckles ancient children
who are unable to wean themselves --
unable, yet, to crawl from their cribs of space.
The drear old woman,
whom Time has kissed so tenderly,
sits and knits the darkness
as thousandfold babes coo
and blink their eyes,
blankets of infinity tucked under their chins,
and a lullabye begins
in an old, old throat --
the same she sang
at the firstborn's first night of dreaming . . .
and, oh, she is so tired of days
that drag her raggedly
toward an end she cannot see
and hasn't courage to think of.
She bides the ages languorously,
and tends her chores fastidiously,
though more slowly now than
once upon a billion years ago.
And you and I
are chained to the rain
in this infinitesimal spot
cut out of an All we cannot comprehend,
and, therefore, do not think of charting courses
that end at end
in the grand design --
while the old woman gives birth to light
and weaves the darkness
century after century after century.

****

Adriane Saylor

LAMENT

Under the cold earth, wet with rain
and windtossed with the leaves of a thousand
seasons,
she sleeps, so still in her cocoon.
She sleeps on through the centuries,
uncaring of world changes, for her world
never changes, and her heart, old and wormy
beats no more with the love that brought her
warm and untimely to this cold bed.
Her lips pucker for the eternal kiss,
and her hands hold the scepter and orb of rule,
but only the beetles and grubs touch her molded skin
and she rules nothing but shadows.
She waits, for that time when like the moon,
she will rise, cold and round and luxuriantly dazzling
before the eyes of men and tantalize them once more.
She will climb over the dust and out of the yawn of her grave
and cast away the shards of death, meeting her lover once more.
Forever has she loved and forever has she waited for this man
Who darkens the stars above her and gives reason to her awakening.
She comes, a breath on the storm, posing in the moonlight
as deadly as a cobra, thinking:
how long has this hunger slept in me, how long have I
sought this sweet embrace?

****

I am writing ...
Like a fool who talks to himself;
Or the cripple who walks by himself;
Or the writer who writes for himself.

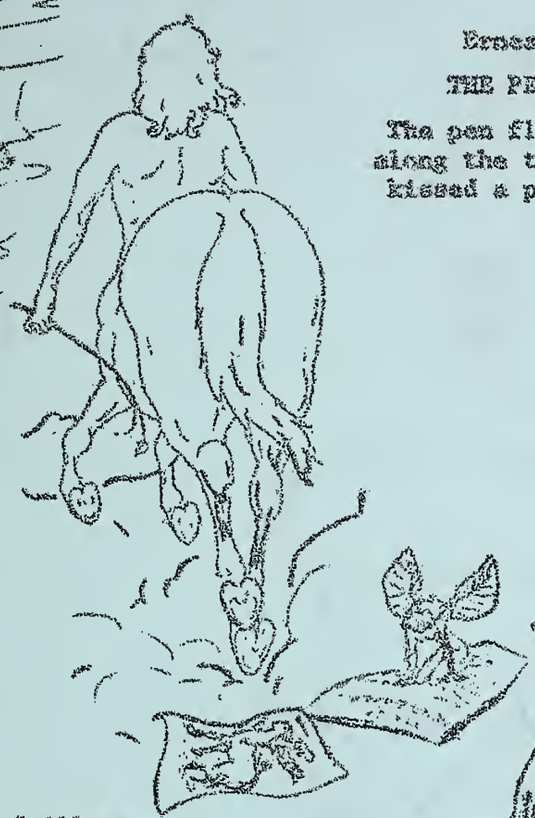
****

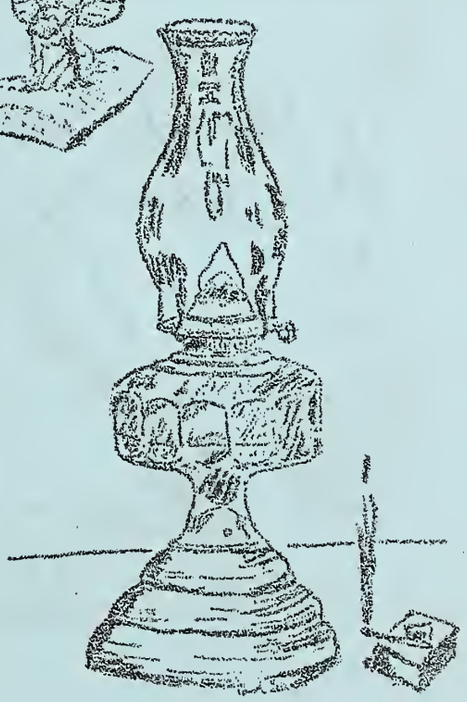
Ernest McCabe

THE PEN FLOWED

The pen flowed carefully
along the thin blue lines and
kissed a period at the end.

****





Michael A. Stillman

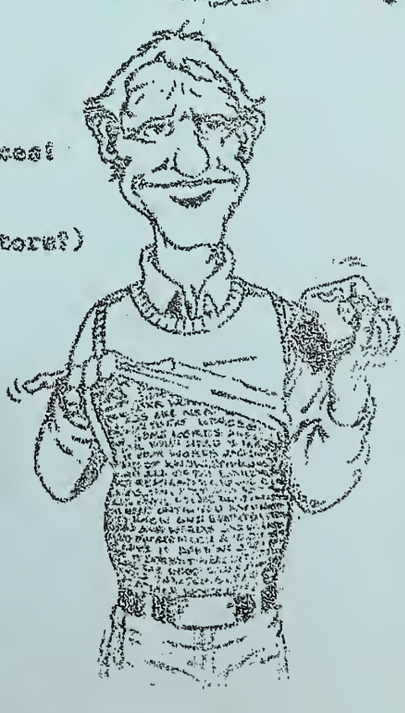
A CALL TO ARMS

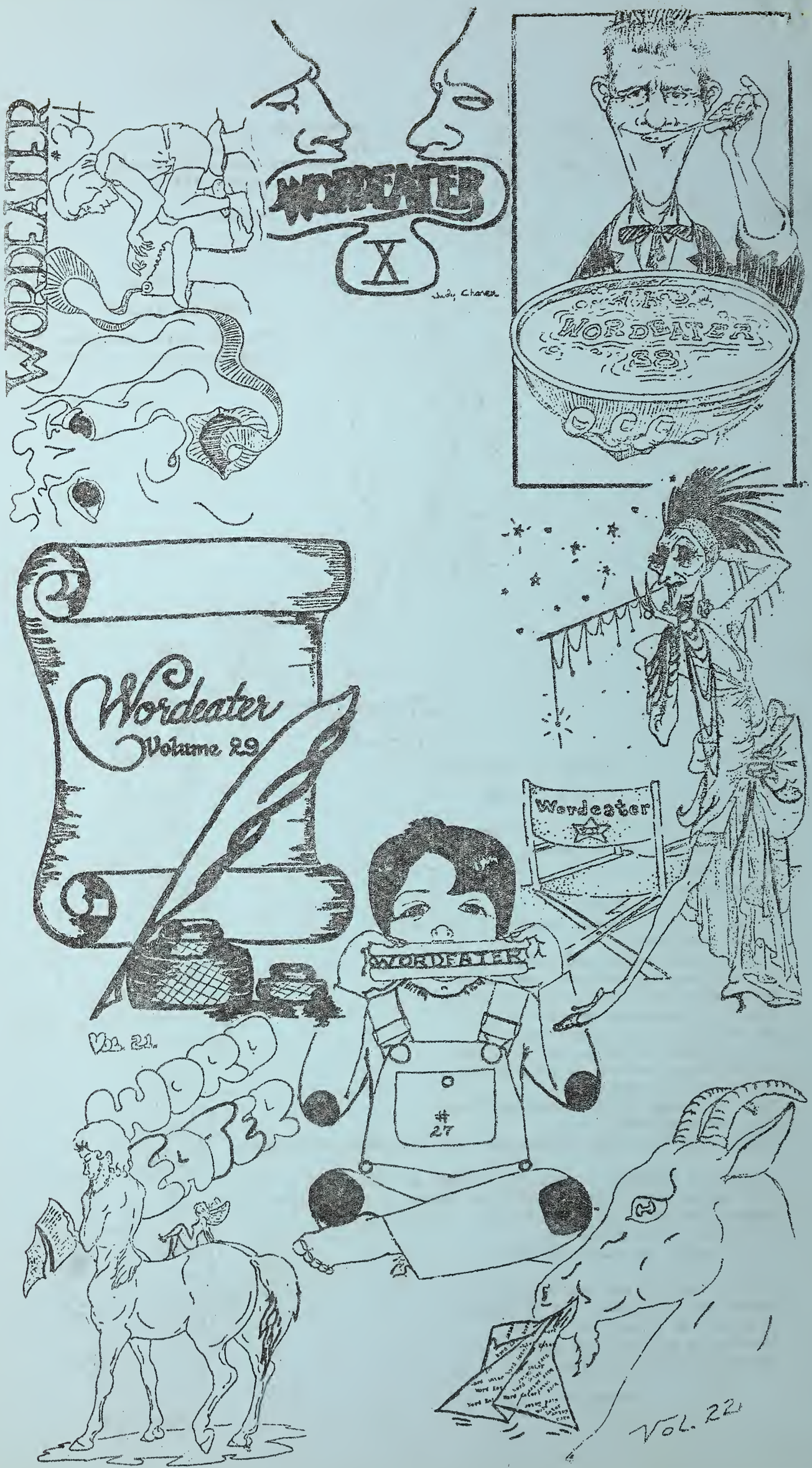
Graffiti: the most universal art form,
The literature of the common man.
Many people read only TV Guide, Stop signs,
And...Graffiti!
These people need us!
C'mon, fellow writers, readers, riders of
The written word!
Jump on your pencil and ride!
Go into the bathroom and communicate!
Bring your thought-provoking quotes,
Your mind-expanding originals,
And your permanent magic markers!
From the cave drawings of yesteryear
To the phone numbers of this morning,
Graffiti is alive!
Take advantage of the "Learning Center"
That everyone must use!
Offer counterpoint to obscenities and character references!

Of course, Graffiti is not a permanent art form.
(What great masterpieces have been erased by bored janitors?)
Erasing Graffiti is censorship,
And janitors are fascists.
But we can't let that stop us!

Today: the toilets of Joliet!
Tomorrow: the Great Wall of China!
Jump on your pencil and ride!
Fiction is reality's playground,
And everyone should play.

****

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